

Watching and listening today, Americans everywhere are saying: I wish I could be there to tell them how sorry we are, how much we grieve for them. And to tell them too, how thankful we are for those they loved, and that we will remember them, and recall always the meaning of their deaths and their lives.

A Marine chaplain, in trying to explain why there could be no human explanation for a tragedy such as this, said once: "You would think it would break the heart of God."

We stand today in the midst of tragedy—the mystery of tragedy. Yet a mystery that is part of that larger awe and wonder that causes us to bow our heads in faith and say of those we mourn, those we have lost, the words of scripture: "Lord now let Thy servants go in peace, Thy word has been fulfilled."

To the families and friends of our fallen colleagues and comrades we extend today our deepest sympathy and condolences—and those of the American people.

We pray that God will give some share of the peace that now belongs to those we lost, to those who knew and loved them in this life.

But as we grieve together we are also thankful—thankful for their lives, thankful for the time we had with them. And proud too—as proud as they were—that they lived their lives as Americans.

We are mindful too—and resolute that their deaths, like their lives, shall have meaning. And that the birthright of human freedom—a birthright that was theirs as Americans and for which they died—will always be ours and our children's. And through our efforts and example, one day, the birthright of every man, woman, and child on earth.

CONGRATULATIONS TO AZERBAIJAN

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I would like to present my most sincere congratulations to President Aliyev on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence. The past several years have proven your nation's commitment to democracy, and I encourage you to continue your efforts aimed at strengthening Azerbaijan's independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty. We, in the U.S. Congress, appreciate Azerbaijan's friendship and support, especially in these times of the international campaign against terrorism. Please, accept, Mr. President, my best wishes to yourself and the Azerbaijani people on this anniversary.

RURAL EXEMPTION ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2001

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Rural Exemption Enhancement Act of 2001" (REEA). This modest proposal would ensure greater regulatory cer-

tainty for many of our nation's rural telephone companies as they continue their efforts to bring quality and affordable advanced telecommunications services to our communities. I am pleased that this legislation has been endorsed by the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies as well as Sierra Telephone Company in my home district.

More than five years ago, Congress passed comprehensive legislation to reform our nation's telecommunications laws—the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In crafting this legislation, Congress wisely included provisions which exempt rural telephone companies from the collocation, unbundling and resale obligations imposed upon incumbent local exchange carriers. Congress understood that these obligations would not serve the best interests of rural consumers and would deter investment in high-cost areas that are already challenging to serve due to a lack of economies of scale.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the rural exemption accorded to rural telephone companies is not permanent and can be lifted by a State commission. Under section 251(f) of the Telecommunications Act, a new entrant may make a bona fide request to a State commission to lift a rural ILEC's exemption. Following a 120 day evaluation of the request, a State commission may lift the exemption if the request from the competing carrier is not found to be unduly economically burdensome, is technically feasible, and is consistent with the universal service provisions of the Act.

I am very concerned, however, that the lifting of a rural telephone company exemption by a State commission currently applies to both voice grade and advanced services. The current process for evaluating a petition to lift a rural exemption provides disincentive for small, rural carriers to make costly investment in advanced telecommunications service infrastructure. For these reasons, I am introducing the "Rural Exemption Enhancement Act."

My legislation should not in any way be interpreted to be a competing proposal to H.R. 1542, the "Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act of 2001" passed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. I am proud to be a cosponsor and active supporter of that proposal. The bill that I am introducing today would simply make it clear that a request to lift the voice grade exemption should be made and evaluated separately from the advanced services exemption.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress and the President will spend the remainder of this session developing legislation that is vital to our nation's economy and national security. I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this legislation forward next year before the 107th Congress adjourns sine die.

IN HONOR OF CELIA CRUZ, RECIPIENT OF THE JAMES SMITHSON BICENTENNIAL MEDAL

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to musical legend Celia Cruz. On Tuesday, October 16, 2001,

Ms. Cruz will be awarded the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal for her distinguished musical career and invaluable contributions to our nation's cultural heritage. The award ceremony will take place at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Celia Cruz was born and raised in the Santa Suárez neighborhood of Havana, Cuba. As a young girl, she spent much of her spare time entertaining her peers, friends, and neighbors by singing lullabies and melodies. In the 1940's, she officially began her musical career by singing on numerous Cuban radio programs. She expanded her musical aptitude by studying at Havana's Conservatory of Music from 1947 to 1950.

In 1950, Celia Cruz gained international acclaim by becoming the lead singer for Cuba's top dance band, La Sonora Matancera. For over fifteen years, La Sonora Matancera electrified sold-out audiences with their vibrant and catchy Afro-Cuban melodies and rhythms.

Throughout much of her career, Celia Cruz has been hailed as the "Queen of Salsa" due to her energetic and animated musical performances. Cruz, a Grammy Award winner and Latina musical icon, has enjoyed a dynamic career that has spanned over five decades, recorded countless albums, and has often performed with musical great Tito Puente.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Celia Cruz, for her immeasurable contributions throughout her illustrious career. The James Smithson, Bicentennial Medal could not have been awarded to a more deserving human being—Celia Cruz, a living legend, who continues to inspire the world.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FAIR TAX TREATMENT FOR INSURANCE AGENTS' TERMINATION PAYMENTS ACT OF 2001

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in order to introduce a small business tax relief measure that will assist thousands of insurance agents throughout this country as they prepare for retirement.

Many exclusive insurance agents who leave or retire from their jobs receive what is known as a "termination payment" under a contractual agreement with their respective insurance companies. These payments are paid for intangible assets, including the agent's "book of business" and goodwill, and are usually spread out over a series of years.

Currently, there is confusion about the tax treatment of these termination payments, which has caused some IRS field agents to question the capital gains treatment of these payments. My bill, the "Fair Tax Treatment for Insurance Agents' Termination Payments Act of 2000," will make it clear that these termination payments are for the sale or other disposition of intangible capital assets and therefore should be subject to capital gains treatment. A clarification of current law is needed to ensure the correct result and prevent unknowing IRS agents from subjecting innocent insurance agents around the country to attack and audit on an issue that has no basis for controversy.